A Messenger Without A Message

(Expanded with theological detail and English Standard Version citations)

The story of David and Absalom in 2 Samuel 18 presents one of Scripture's clearest illustrations of a person who runs with zeal but without a true message. It teaches us something crucial about ministry: having passion is not enough; one must also have the right message from God.

When Absalom rebelled against his father David, a fierce battle broke out in the forest of Ephraim. David did not join the battle personally; instead, he entrusted it to his commander, Joab. Before the fighting began, David issued a clear command—*a command rooted in the heart of a father*:

> *2 Samuel 18:5, ESV*
>
> *“Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.”*

However, Joab ignored David’s instruction. When Absalom was found hanging in a tree, Joab killed him (2 Samuel 18:14). Once the troops learned of Absalom’s death, the battle ended and the people dispersed.

The next challenge was to inform David of what had happened. Delivering such sorrowful news required both courage and clarity of message.

Two messengers stepped forward:

1. Ahimaaz — Zealous but uninformed

2. The Cushite — Faithful, informed, and obedient

Ahimaaz wanted desperately to run—even though Joab insisted that the message was not “good news” (2 Samuel 18:22). Joab knew that Ahimaaz lacked the necessary information and that his

excitement was not matched by understanding.

The Cushite is sent

Joab instead commissioned the Cushite:

> *—2 Samuel 18:21, ESV*
>
> *“Go, tell the king what you have seen.”*

Unlike Ahimaaz, the Cushite had witnessed the events firsthand. He had substance, not just speed.

Ahimaaz outruns the true messenger—but arrives empty

Because of his zeal, Ahimaaz ran faster and arrived first. Yet when he stood before the king—standing where truth was required—he had nothing meaningful to say:

> *—2 Samuel 18:29, ESV*

> *“I saw a great commotion, but I do not know what it was.”*

Ahimaaz ran with enthusiasm but no message.

When the Cushite arrived, however, he delivered the truth with solemn respect:

> *2 Samuel 18:32, ESV*
>
> *“May the enemies of my lord the king be like that young man.”*

He told David what actually happened.

This narrative is a profound allegory for ministry today.

What Does God Want Us To Learn?

Many Christians desire to serve God—as pastors, evangelists, teachers, prophets, intercessors, singers, writers, or through other forms of ministry. But it is possible to run like Ahimaaz: full of zeal, but empty of the message God actually sent us to proclaim.

THE TRUE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH IS NOT SELF-DEFINED

Jesus Christ gave one universal commission to every believer—regardless of calling or ministry gift:

> *Matthew 28:19–20, ESV*
>
> *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations… teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*

This is not optional.
This is not limited to pastors or apostles.

This is not a “different calling.”

It is the core mission of the Church.

Some say,
“I’m not called to preach repentance.”
“I’m not called to make disciples—only to encourage people.”

But this is the language of an Ahimaaz—someone running without the message Christ entrusted to His followers.

TRUE MINISTRY ALWAYS POINTS PEOPLE TO CHRIST

The apostles understood this. Their message was not self-help, motivational teaching, or worldly success. It was:

- repentance (Acts 2:38)

- faith in Christ alone (Acts 4:12)

- holiness (1 Peter 1:15–16)
- denying self (Luke 9:23)
- obedience to Jesus (John 14:15)
- transformation into Christ’s image (Romans 8:29)

In fact, Jesus Himself taught that discipleship requires total surrender:

> *Luke 14:27, ESV*
>
> *“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”*

Any ministry that avoids pointing people to Christ’s lordship, repentance, holiness, and obedience is running off course.

Are You A Messenger With A Message Or Without One?

If what we teach focuses more on earthly success than spiritual transformation…
If our sermons emphasize comfort but avoid repentance…
If our music stirs emotion but not conviction…
If our “encouragement” leads people to self-confidence instead of Christ-dependence…

Then we are running fast, like Ahimaaz—
but delivering nothing of eternal value.

Paul warns that anyone building a ministry must build on Christ alone:

> *1 Corinthians 3:11, ESV*

> *“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

Otherwise, our work will burn up before God (1 Corinthians 3:13–15).

The Message Is Christ

The world does not need more motivational speakers.
It does not need entertainers.
It does not need charm or charisma.

The world needs the Gospel—the message Paul described as:

> *Romans 1:16, ESV*
>
> *“the power of God for salvation.”*

That message is:Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23)Christ risen (Romans 6:4)Christ reigning (Revelation 19:16)Christ returning (Acts 1:11)

Everything we preach must point back to Him.

Run—yes.
Serve—yes.
Be zealous—yes.

But above all, carry the message Christ gave, not one you invented.Be like the Cushite: faithful to tell the truth.Not like Ahimaaz: running eagerly but empty-handed.May your ministry be rooted in the Gospel, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord bless you and make you a faithful messenger of His Word.

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